

## CHAPTER 3

### SECTION 16.9

# EXCIMER LASER PHOTOTHERAPEUTIC KERATECTOMY FOR CORNEAL DYSTROPHIES

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## I. PROCEDURE CODE

65400, 65430, 65435

## II. DESCRIPTION

Excimer laser phototherapeutic keratectomy (PTK) is a treatment to correct damage caused by a diseased cornea. The laser system produces its surgical effect by ablative photodecomposition. The PTK procedure involves the removal of the epithelium (outer layer). The eye is anesthetized with eye drops, held open with a gentle speculum. A Methylcellulose solution is applied. Methylcellulose exposes the protruding tissue of the corneal irregularities to the excimer laser's energy. Combining the precision of the excimer laser with the control of a computer, thin layers of corneal tissue are vaporized microscopically and the surface irregularities are etched away.

## III. POLICY

A. PTK is a covered treatment for patients 18 years of age and over with:

1. Decreased best corrected visual acuity and/or with disabling pain that are the result of superficial corneal epithelial irregularities or stromal scars in the anterior one-third of the cornea.
2. Only after alternative treatment options have failed.

*NOTE: PTK (Phototherapeutic Keratectomy) surgery to remove opacities, or use as an alternative to corneal transplant is not to be confused with PRK (Photorefractive Keratectomy) which is a surgical procedure that corrects distance vision by reshaping the cornea (myopia or nearsightedness).*

B. Medically necessary services and supplies required in the diagnosis and treatment of disease involving the eye are covered.

C. PTK for surgical intervention in the following eye pathology is covered:

1. Scars subsequent to previous (not concurrent) pterygium excision.

2. Corneal scars and opacity (from trauma and inactive infections).
3. Residual band keratopathy after unsuccessful EDTA treatment.
4. Dystrophies (Reis-Buckler's granular and lattice).
5. Irregular corneal surfaces associated with filamentary keratitis and Salzmann's nodular degeneration.
6. Thygeson's superficial keratitis.

D. PTK is a covered benefit for the following conditions if the patient is fully aware that the treatment might precipitate a recurrence of the herpes simplex infection:

1. Uncontrolled vascular and autoimmune disease.
2. Immunocompromised patients or those on drug therapy for severe dry eye problems.
3. A history of herpes simplex infection.

#### IV. EXCLUSIONS

A. Photorefractive keratectomy to correct nearsightedness or farsightedness is not a covered procedure. (See [Chapter 3, Section 16.3](#).)

B. The use of VIsx Excimer Laser system in the following:

1. Treatment of scars and irregularities in patients with keratoconus.
2. Candidates with previous corneal surgery.
3. Patients with corneal neovascularizations near the ablation zone.
4. Pregnant women.
5. The treatment of recurrent corneal erosions.
6. The treatment of corneal pathology in the presence of recurrent or active ocular disease such as iritis, uveitis, keratitis sicca, or severe blepharitis.

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